1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

ETHNOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH WORK

DURING THE SWEDISH CHACO-CORDILLERA-EXPEDITION 1901-1902

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BY

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[Front cover]

142 Of the Choroti among whom I carried out my investigations, the men

appeared to be fairly tall of stature,[1] figs. 16—19, 30, whilst the height of the women was remarkably small, figs. 19—22, 30. I took height measurements of ten men and thirteen women, but as the table got lost during the expedition, I am not able to give the maximum and minimum measurements. But I have the computed average heights preserved in my diary, and they are 170 cm for the men, and 152 cm for the women. The height measurements at a later date made of Choroti (who had come to look for work at sugar plantations in Argentina) by Lehmann-Nitsche show an average height of 161.6 for men (aver. of 20 individuals), and for women 155.3 (10 individuals). That Lehmann-Nitsche and I arrived at such appreciably divergent results is because our measurements were taken of so small a number of people. [136] Lehmann-Nitsche having, however, measured twice as many males as I, it may be presumed that the average height obtained by him more nearly approaches the true average for the men of the tribe than does the result obtained through my measurements.

Fig. 15. Spectacle-cayman (Caiman sclerops). Camp at Tatarenda. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

[304] The shape of the skull is predominantly dolichocephalic, and shows no traces of artificial deformation.[2] The men, as well as the women, are, as a rule, strongly and proportionately built, although in some individuals the breast is flat and the belly rather big (figs. 17, 37), the latter no doubt [142 146] resulting from the fact that the Choroti largely subsist on roots and fruits, a kind of diet usually producing distension of the stomach. As an example, in the rural districts of Europe it is no rare thing to come across persons, especially children, who, from a too-protracted diet of potatoes, have developed a distended stomach, a so-called »potato belly».

[1] That also among the Indians of the eastern part of the Chaco tall individuals are found, is evident from the following statement by Professor Carl Lindman: »Those Indians whom I saw along the Paraguay, opposite Asuncion and northwards, were to a large extent muscular and well-built, some, even, were very tall of body and athletic looking.» Lindman (1), p. 72.

[2] These items of information have been supplied me by Professor Gustav Retzius, who has examined the Choroti skulls brought home by our expedition.

142 The skin colour in adult Choroti is brown, newly born children have light yellowish-brown skin, but it soon gets darker, so that even rather young children, figs. 21 and 22, seem to be of a very dark colour. The hair is lank, and the iris dark brown. From Lehmann-Nitsche's and my own anthropological observations I have compiled the following table.

The Choroti: some physical features.

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Sex	Average height, cm	Shape of skull	Skin colour, von Luschan's scale	Hair colour, Fischer's scale	Iris, Martin's scale
Men	[1] 161.6 [2] 170.0	Dolichocephalic, predominantly	22, predominantly	4, predominantly	4, predominantly
Women ...	[3] 153.3 [4] 152.0	Dolichocephalic, predominantly	18, predominantly	4, predominantly	4, predominantly

145 [805] As the Choroti do not keep count of the age of their children, nor of their own, it is impossible to obtain, by direct questioning, from these Indians any information as to the relation of puberty to age in individuals. One of our Creole servants, who had lived a long time on the Chaco, has, however, told me that Indian children arrive early at physical [582] development (fig. 24), and that the girls are considered marriageable after their first menstruation, which, according to my informant, occurs at the age of ten to twelve. And, according to the same person's statement, the boys are ripe for marrying at the age of about fifteen. The blossoming-time of the women is very brief, and as they grow old they often become repulsively ugly. It is notable that the old women, as a rule, were thin of body, whilst elderly men often were inclined to stoutness.

[621] 361 The Choroti live together in villages. The selection of the village site depends primarily on the supply of water and food, and, in the case of cattle-owning Indians, also on grazing conditions. Often the huts are built alongside shade-giving trees (fig. 25). The fan palm found in the [824] Chaco (Copernicia australis), (fig. 10,) being valuable to the Indians on account of its easily worked wood, its pith (used for food), and its leaves

[1] Acc. to Lehmann-Nitsche's measurements of 30 individuals.
[2] » » the Author's » » 10 »
[3] » » Lehmann-Nitsche's » » 10 »
[4] » » the Author's » » 13 »

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Fig. 16. A man, in front of his hut. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 17. A man, with frontlet of birdskin. Choroti. Tatarenda camp. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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(material for roofing huts), the Indians are apt to build their villages in the proximity of some grove, or forest, of palms (›palmar‹). As a case in instance, the Choroti village at Tatarenda was situated quite close to a palm grove, and not very far from a largish palm forest. It is of importance that algaroba trees should be growing in the neighbourhood, as the fruit of this tree plays a prominent part in the food arrangements of these Indians.

The huts are of a very primitive character, and are built in the following manner; With a digging-stick (fig. 27) of hard, heavy wood, a succession of holes is dug, or jabbed, in the ground, so as to form a circle with a diameter of 2 metres or upwards. In each of these holes is planted an unlopped, bent-grown branch, thick end downwards, so that the tips of the branch point towards the centre of the circle. By this means a cupola-shaped frame is formed (fig. 26). This frame is covered with a thick layer of palm leaves and grass (figs. 16, 25), unless palm leaves are difficult to obtain, when the hut will be covered with grass only, although huts thatched in this way have less rain resistance. But even the most carefully built Choroti huts are, however, poor enough dwellings which, in any heavy downpour of rain, are unable to keep those inside them from a wetting.

Fig. 18. A man holding a pestle in his hands. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

The huts have one, or even two, entrances, about one metre in height (figs. 16, 25), but huts of the largest size are sometimes provided with several entrances. A sort of porch, constructed of branches and grass, may occasionally be built out from the entrance. When several huts are close together, they may not unfrequently be connected with each other by means of covered passages, or tunnels, built similarly to the huts.

The latter do not contain many utensils. Ranged along the wall, bowls made of gourd shell, a few clay vessels and a wooden mortar, are generally seen. In prettily knitted net bags of spun caraguatá fibre,[1] the Choroti keep all manner of small articles, such as mussel-shell spoons,

[1] Caraguatá, or chahuar (chaguar), Bromelia serra, is, as I have already pointed out, especially common in the Chaco.

wooden sticks for fire-drilling, toilet articles, magic rattles, etc.

352 [513] wooden sticks for fire-drilling, toilet articles, magic rattles etc. Contrary to the Chiriguano, the Choroti do not use bedsteads or hammocks, but sleep on the ground, with only an animal skin, or a woollen mantle between themselves and the ground.

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Fig. 19. A man, with his daughters. Choroti. From the dry soil forest region between Caiza and Crevaux. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

343 251 At the cooking-fires in front of the huts, the Choroti now and then erect square sheds, with flat, grass-covered roofs. These sheds are constructed like food-storing racks (fig. 28), and are used both as a protection from the sun and as sleeping places during hot nights. According to Nordenskiöld, the Indians on the Pilcomayo use the roofs of these sheds for drying fish on.[1] I am of opinion that these sheds, originally, were only designed for the storing, drying, smoking or roasting of fish, and that, therefore, their use as shade-givers or sleeping-shelters is only

[1] Nordenskiöld (18), p. 36.

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Fig. 21. A young woman suckling her baby. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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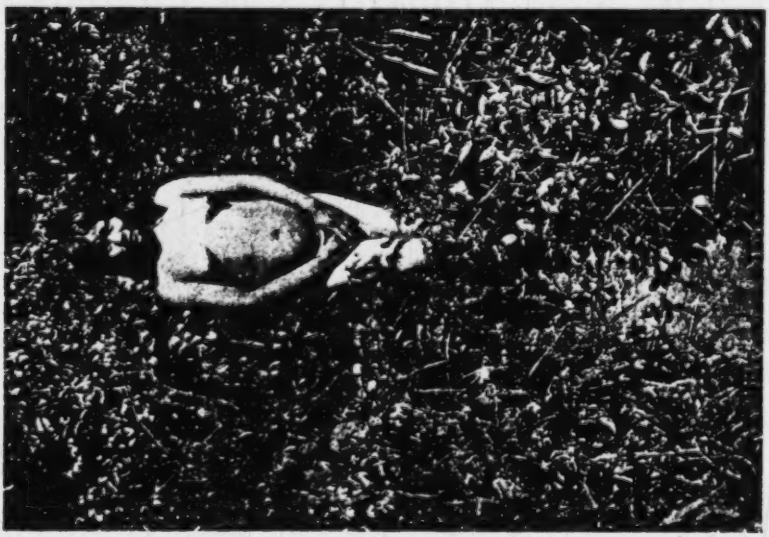

Fig. 20. A girl. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 22. A woman, with infant. Note that the woman's ear-lobes are pierced, but that she is wearing no ear-lobe discs. Choroti, Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

Fig. 23. A boy and a girl (probably about 7 and 8 years old). Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 24. A boy and a girl (age probably about 10). The boy is wearing a frontlet and armlets, made from palm leaves. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 30. Men and women. Back row (8 individuals): men and youths. Front row (4 individuals): women. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

CHAPTER II.

The Choroti (2). Dress and ornaments.

Men's dress. Garments of protection against arrows, fish-bites and thorny plants. Hair-dressing. Frontlets. Hair-nets. Head ornaments of feathers, etc. Ear-lobe discs. The ear-boring custom. Necklaces. Armlets. Anklets. Finger rings. Dress and ornaments of the women. Tattooing. Painting of the face. Cutting the hair short. Pulling out of hairs. Toilet articles and their receptacles. Lack of cleanliness. Phthiriophagy.

291 On account of the warm climate of the Chaco, the Choroti do not require much in the way of dress. The smaller children are always completely naked (fig. 23), and when the men are engaged in any harder kind of work, they then usually only wear a woollen apron, passed between the legs and fastened in front and behind to a string made of caraguatá fibre or wool, tied round the waist (figs. 16, 18 and 30). Occasionally they fasten pieces of cloth, of different sizes, round the waist without tucking them between the legs (fig. 30). I have also seen Choroti men wearing broad, fringed, leather belts (fig. 31), but these skirt-like garments seemed to be of rather rare

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286 291 the same colour on either side. Beside these six groups of stripes, there is a thin, greyish white stripe running along each of the longer edges of the mantle. The garment is woven in one piece. In the centre of the

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Fig. 32. Choroti Indians. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

mantle there are figures sewn with reddish brown, woollen-yarn (fig. 34), probably property marks.[1]

291 When engaged in work or pastimes, the Choroti men usually take off their mantles. In »our» Choroti village we therefore always saw a large proportion of the men going about practically naked (figs. 16, 18 and 171).

[1] Cf. Nordenskiöld (13), p. 32.

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292 302 feathers, tied inside a woven or plaited fillet, usually no more than a centimetre wide, of coarse caragnatá, or woollen-yarn (fig. 45).

And it is also principally at dances that the men of the Choroti wear a sort of knitted skullcaps of woollen-yarn, net-like, and with a chin strap.

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Fig. 39. A man with a woven frontlet of wool (greyish-white and brownish-black), and ear-lobe discs of wood. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

531 These hair-nets are often studded with snail-shell spangles (fig. 46), or the chin straps decorated with down (fig. 47). With the magic character of these and other ornaments from the Chorotis, I shall deal in a later chapter.

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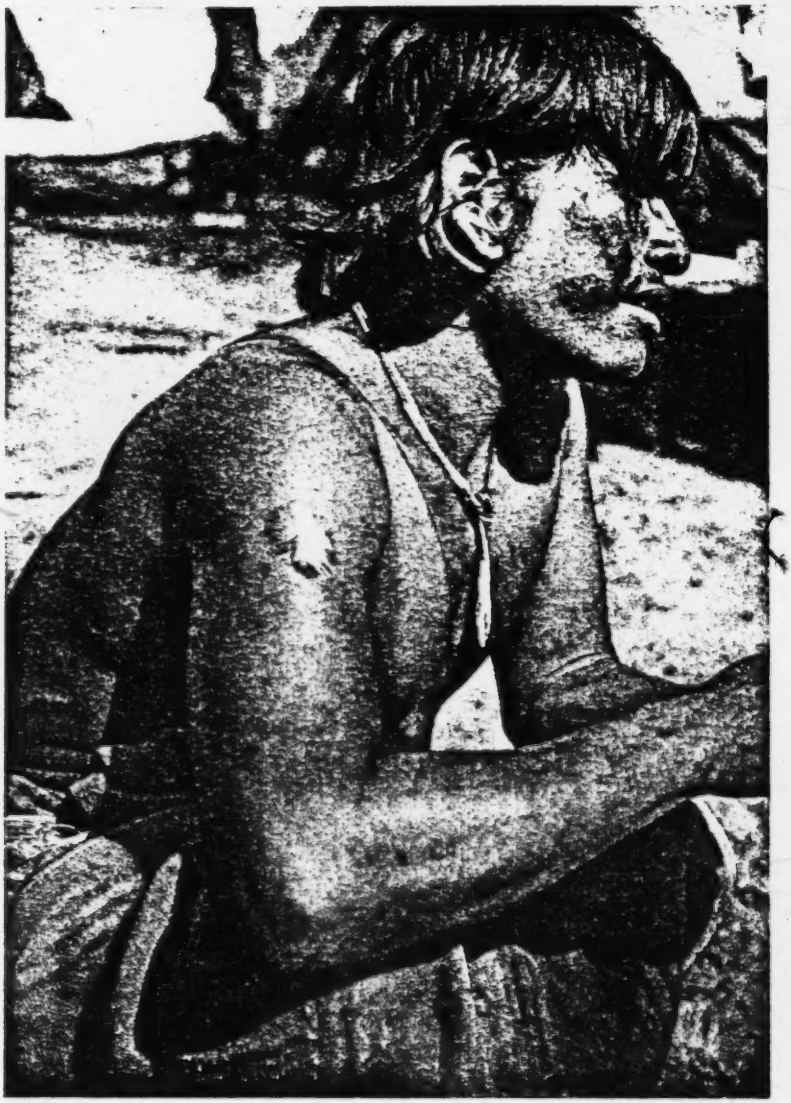

Fig. 53. A man with ear-lobe discs, set with pieces of tin. On his right upper arm is seen the scar from the terrible bite of a palometa fish (Serrosalmo sp.). Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 61. Choroti girls, wearing »tipoys» from the hips. The girl farthest on the left is wearing a necklace of porcelain buttons. The other necklaces consist of glass beads. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

Fig. 62. Choroti girls with »tipoys» fastened over the shoulders with cactus spines. The necklaces are of glass beads. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 89. Woman taking lice from her husband's head. Choroti on their wandering towards the Pilcomayo. Dry-soil forest region between Caiza and Fort Crevaux. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. K.

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Fig. 152. A Choroti girl who has put decayed tree stumps on top of the fire in order to preserve it until again needed. Choroti, Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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Fig. 179. A girl, and the lover she has chosen for herself. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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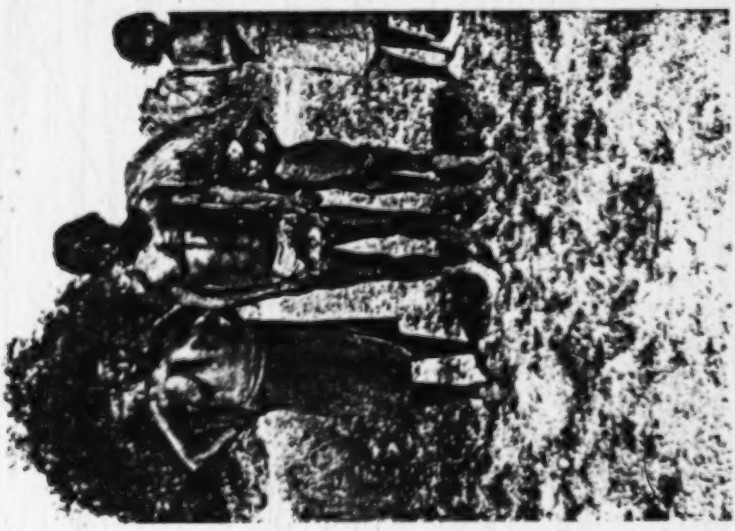

Fig. 178. A chief, with his son and two of his three wives. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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CHAPTER II.

General characteristics and material culture.

In their physical characteristics the *Choroti* and the *Mataco* show the same affinity as appears in their languages. Both of them are strongly built and of middle height, the Mataco somewhat taller than the Choroti. The average height of the former seems to be about 163 or 164 cm. for the men and 154 or 155 cm. for the women; of the latter about 162 or 163 cm. for the men and 152 or 153 cm. for the women. In their sturdy appearance the Mataco resemble the mountain Indians, and in former times there has probably been intermarriage between them and the Quichuas. The hair of both tribes is black, coarse and straggling and is worn long by both men and women, except when it is temporarily cut short for ceremonial reasons. The eyes are dark-brown, the nose somewhat flattened, and the features of the face generally irregular, especially among the Mataco. Both tribes know the custom of tattooing the face, the women being always tattooed, the men only in some cases, and never as completely as the women.

I need not dwell upon the physical characteristics of the *Tobas* since they have been described by nearly all authors ever since Lozano. They certainly form an easily recognisable type of Indian, differing considerably from the rest of the Chaco tribes, one salient feature being their remarkably tall and strong build of body. The Tobas are in fact among the tallest of all South American Indians, being in this respect comparable with the ancient Patagonians, to whom they were probably related, as well as with the present Ona Indians of the mainland of Tierra del Fuego. The physical anthropology of the Tobas, just as that of the Mataco and the Choroti, has been studied scientifically by the German anthropologist Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche.[1])

[1]) Lehmann-Nitsche, R. *Estudios antropológicos sobre los Chiriguanos, Chorotes, Matacos y Tobas* (*Anales del Museo de La Plata*. Buenos Aires, 1908).